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Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5990th meeting

Wednesday, 8 October 2008, 10.55 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Zhang Yesui	(China)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Payot
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Koudougou
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Bayley
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2008/586)

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08-54062 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2008/586)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Haiti, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Cazeau (Haiti), took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Hédi Annabi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Annabi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/586, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Hédi Annabi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Annabi: I am pleased to be back in the Security Council today and to have this opportunity to discuss the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/586), which provides an account of developments between mid-March and the middle of August. At the same time, significant events have taken place since the issuance of the report, most importantly the devastating series of hurricanes that struck the country from mid-August to early September and the nomination and confirmation of the new Government. Those events mean that we stand simultaneously today at a time of challenge and a time of hope.

With regard to the first of those events, the toll of the sequence of hurricanes and storms that struck Haiti has been reported through a number of grim statistics. Over 800,000 Haitians have lost their homes or have been directly affected. There has been massive destruction of roads and bridges and large-scale destruction of crops. But those figures cannot truly convey the level of devastation that is involved or the depth of suffering that it has entailed for an already desperately poor population that has now lost what little it had.

I have now twice visited the city of Gonaïves, which was particularly affected, and those two trips have left me with a personal and abiding sense of the scale of human tragedy that is involved: the homes that have been destroyed; the families that have been uprooted and no longer have a place to call their own; the lives that have been changed forever.

The Mission gave priority to supporting the response to the catastrophe over the past month by undertaking evacuations, providing emergency medical care, supporting urgent efforts to shore up collapsing infrastructure and helping to bring critical relief supplies to those who need them, all in collaboration with national authorities and the United Nations country team.

Those efforts made a crucial difference in the early days and weeks, buying time for the normal humanitarian mechanisms to gather momentum. I have brought with me some photographs, which I hope will

be distributed to members of the Council, to help convey the scale of the calamity and the activities of MINUSTAH troops in response. I would also like to place on record my deep appreciation for the courage, dedication and professionalism shown by our civilian police and military personnel. I am proud of them and grateful to those Member States which have made them available.

Today, the United Nations agencies, particularly the World Food Programme (WFP), are providing large-scale assistance, while our troops continue to provide vital logistical and security assistance. Some 700,000 people have now received emergency food and relief supplies throughout the country. But it should be noted that even though there is now a relatively smoothly running process to attend to immediate needs, we also need a clear programme to meet longer-term reconstruction requirements. I will return to that point later.

Alongside those huge challenges, this is also, as I said, a time of hope based on a new political beginning. The need to respond to the catastrophic problems posed by the hurricanes helped to unblock a political stand-off that had lasted for nearly five months and to generate a new and urgently needed sense of solidarity. The lengthy and difficult confirmation process for a new Government was concluded on 5 September. Since then, the parliament has shown a fresh level of interest in working with the executive branch, having passed emergency legislation enabling greater flexibility to provide relief funds, and having adopted a supplementary budget as required under the Constitution.

On the side of the Government too, there has been a concerted effort to reach out. President Préval visited Gonaïves last Thursday. There have also been joint visits by the Prime Minister and parliamentarians to the regions and systematic engagement of parliamentarians in relief efforts. Furthermore, civil society and the private sector have been working alongside elected representatives to assist victims of the hurricanes, and the Government is energetically pursuing a policy of communication to inform and engage the public.

This new approach of solidarity and outreach is already facilitating concrete results, and it brings a renewed possibility for progress. But at the same time, it remains extremely fragile and will undoubtedly be tested in the months ahead.

Historic tendencies towards political confrontation and conflict could easily re-emerge in the context of the forthcoming elections for one third of the Senate. They could also be sparked by discussion of a number of potentially divisive topics that are under consideration, including the appropriate security structure for Haiti and the question of constitutional reform. Moreover, the suffering created by global economic trends and greatly exacerbated by the hurricanes has created a potential reservoir of serious discontent that can be manipulated for political reasons.

In that uncertain environment, it is incumbent above all on the Haitian leadership to make every effort to maintain and build on the new tendency towards constructive collaboration. At the same time, the international community can make an important contribution, not only through political support, but also by helping the new Government to deliver what the country needs, thereby enhancing its credibility. A joint effort will be required to help ensure that the country stays on the right path towards stability and economic recovery.

The report before the Council summarizes a number of areas where progress must be made in order to consolidate stability as requested by the Security Council. The consolidation plan, which builds on the initial outline provided in the Secretary-General's previous report (S/2008/202), draws on extensive discussion with the Haitian authorities and is based on national reform plans. It suggests that stability will require progress in several areas: first, the political and institutional situation; secondly, extension of State authority, including border management; thirdly, strengthening of the security sector; fourthly, enhancement of justice and corrections; and fifthly, economic and social development. I would like to briefly discuss each of those areas, focusing in particular on what MINUSTAH has accomplished and on the challenges that lie ahead.

With regard to the political situation, MINUSTAH is working with the national authorities to prepare for the senatorial elections, which were originally supposed to take place last November. Those preparations have been greatly complicated by the confusion generated by the hurricanes. It will probably take four to five months to complete the necessary

technical steps once a date has been set by the authorities. However, it is important for that process to advance. While it may lead to a potentially more volatile environment in the short term, as I mentioned earlier, it can, in the medium term, help to create a more stable and normal institutional environment, which can in turn make it easier for the leadership to address other difficult political issues.

Meanwhile, further progress must be made in strengthening the State. Since the adoption of resolution 1780 (2007) last October, MINUSTAH has sought to assist the Haitian authorities in developing a comprehensive approach to border management. Officials at the senior and expert levels have shown interest in advancing in that area, which is critical for the State's financial and physical security, although it will be a challenging task. In addition, MINUSTAH has continued to focus on local governance and has played a significant role in facilitating the ability of the State to respond to the needs of the regions. However, much remains to be done in terms of capacity-building, while Haiti's overall vision for the arrangements for local governance still has not taken final shape.

Furthermore, a concerted effort is required to improve the capabilities of the national administration and of key ministries. MINUSTAH has made a contribution in those ministries that are most relevant to its mandate, including in particular the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior, which has responsibility for local government. However, a more general, systematic and coordinated effort is needed. It will require further definition of a national programme in that regard, and extensive bilateral assistance.

In the area of security, MINUSTAH troops and police continue to play an essential role. That is clear from the Secretary-General's report, which highlights their engagement in controlling the violence in April. In the last month, the military and police have shown themselves to be just as critical in responding to natural disasters as they were to man-made threats.

The country will continue to face a variety of threats in the coming months — attempts by gangs to reconstitute themselves; criminality, including in particular kidnapping; and the risk of civil unrest — all of which could be exacerbated by the socio-economic situation and exploited for political reasons. We therefore believe that the continued presence for the coming 12 months of international troops and formed police, with their current strength and tasking, will be essential to help the Haitian authorities respond in all of those areas.

At the same time, we will be proceeding with our efforts to strengthen Haiti's own security capability. The development of the Haitian National Police represents a particularly visible example of institution-building in the country, with Haitian National Police officers present throughout the capital and the country. Of course, they are not always in a position to accomplish everything they would like. They are still a young and modestly equipped force. There are areas where their skills could be improved and where their observance of professional standards must be strengthened, but they carry themselves with a new pride, and I believe they will, in due course, become a stronger, more effective service to provide adequate security for their people.

Following the blueprint laid out in the Haitian National Police Reform Plan, MINUSTAH will be pursuing its efforts in the coming year to address residual problems — including through the ongoing vetting process — and to strengthen their skills and institutional capabilities, while working with bilateral donors to ensure the provision of necessary equipment and infrastructure.

The enhancement of police must be complemented by the strengthening of other rule-of-law institutions. Again, clear programmes for reform processes in both areas have been prepared and adopted by the Government and significant advances have taken place, including during the past five months, notwithstanding the difficult political context. With regard to the justice system, the School for Magistrates is operational once again and a small class of magistrates has begun training courses. The Conseil Supérieur du Pouvoir Judiciaire, which will be the main supervisory body, is taking shape.

In corrections, efforts are under way to expand prison facilities, although painfully slowly in view of the appalling state of the penitentiary system. Corrections staffing has been increased by about 50 per cent with the graduation of a class of 227 cadets, the first to be trained in almost a decade. Those are both long-term processes, but they are crucial to the country's stability. We will continue to work closely with the new Government to promote progress in those

areas and to engage bilateral partners, whose support is indispensable.

Finally, it is vital that progress be made in addressing the socio-economic situation. Development is not, of course, the business of peacekeeping operations, although it is our job to create an environment conducive to economic and social development. The point I wish to stress here is that our efforts cannot and will not be successful unless there is some prospect of tangible improvement in the daily lives of the Haitian people. The factors that created a sense of desperation in the spring — the rise in prices, the absence of employment, the lack of basic services — continue and have in fact been hugely exacerbated by the natural disasters that have struck the country. A poor, hungry and desperate population is simply not compatible with stability. It is vital that donors and agencies build upon the remarkable efforts they made to respond in April and again in September, and seek to lay the foundation for a substantial recovery that might make such emergency response unnecessary in the future.

The convening of a long-deferred discussion of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper might offer an opportunity to advance such longer-term planning and to launch its urgently needed implementation. It will also be essential that any such discussion take into account the vast extent of the damage created by the hurricanes and explore how an exceptional, large-scale effort might be launched to help Haiti recreate a basic infrastructure. Without such an effort, without a major reconstruction plan, Haiti cannot hope to truly begin the process of recovery.

I know that this is a difficult time globally, with enormous demands on a finite number of resources, but I would like to note that even a major reconstruction effort for Haiti would not entail a huge expenditure in global terms and could be extraordinarily good value in safeguarding the investment the Council has made to date and in pre-empting future costs associated with renewed instability and uncontrolled population movements.

To conclude, I would like to close by making three more general points regarding the plans to consolidate the stabilization process in Haiti. First, as stressed in the Secretary-General's report, the timelines for all of these areas are subject to change. It is essential that we evaluate our progress not just by the calendar, but according to effective achievement of the objectives. If we disengage before they are completed, we run the risk of undermining everything that we have achieved.

A second, related point is that progress in each of the dimensions of stability is interlinked. Political cooperation is a prerequisite for reform of the State or economic development, yet it must in turn be reinforced by enhancement of the country's institutions and improvement in the socio-economic situation. We must seek to support progress in each of those areas, which are co-dependent and mutually reinforcing. We must try to advance in all of them if we are to advance in any.

Thirdly, the consolidation of stability depends on the engagement of three sets of actors: the Haitian leadership and people, which must work together to make decisions, set priorities and put them into effect; MINUSTAH and the United Nations system, which must support the implementation of those plans on the ground; and the wider international community, whose assistance and resources are indispensable to turn those plans into reality. None of us can truly deliver on our own. If we are going to be successful, we must work together and assume our respective responsibilities in a closely coordinated partnership.

Notwithstanding the setbacks that have taken place and the scope of the challenges that lie ahead, this remains a time of hope for Haiti. If we stay the course, if we pursue a broad approach and if we all remain engaged in an effective partnership, I am convinced that we can succeed and that Haiti can emerge from its troubled past towards a better future.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Annabi for his briefing.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.